

Paul A. Manuel
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The Ambassador Fishing Reels of Tugg & Mason Limited

Several years ago I spotted an interesting looking Canadian made level-wind fishing reel at an old tackle show but I didn't buy it as it was a "parts-reel" missing an end cap and the spool was filled with steel wire rather than regular fishing line. I guess somebody had been using it to troll deep for "lakers" or "brookies". [For bass masters and surf fishermen reading this, those are species of freshwater trout that lurk deep in lakes around the thermocline during our hot northern summer months. Wire line is used to effectively troll down to about 50 feet without the need for a downrigger. You can even use this set-up to "easily" troll deep from a canoe.] However, stiff and kink-prone wire is a pain to strip off a spool - at least when you are trying to get rid of it - and the assembly on the reel side plate where the bearing cap was missing from this parts-reel looked unusual. I figured it would be difficult to find a substitute of the cap, so I left this parts-reel behind... but the beauty of its garnet-red handles stuck in my mind. As my interest in collecting Canadian reels increased I kept looking for another copy.

Over the next few years, from 4 different fellow Canadian collectors at 3 different venues I ultimately acquired 4 Ambassador reel bodies including the parts-reel I had originally passed, plus I obtained two versions of the reel boxes and one copy of box paper. I now knowⁱ as well that at least 2 versions of the box paper exist. The 4 reel bodies I obtained were primarily parts reels when purchased but looking over them as a group I came to realize that I had all the original parts needed to assemble 2 complete reels, each with a different version of the logo, different handles and boxes to match.

The earlier version of the reel, which seems to be the most commonly found, is marked "PAT. PEND." on the back plate. It also has a simple circle for a logo on the front plate enclosing the words: "AMBASSADOR / TML / MADE IN CANADA". It came with 2 black plastic grasps on the handle and was contained in a good quality, Dijon yellow, linen-finish, 2 part cardboard box printed the same on both ends, as follows:

<p>AMBASSADOR FISHING REEL * BALL BEARING END THRUSTS * QUADRUPLE MULTIPLYING * LEVEL WIND * ANTI-BACKLASH ~~~ Made in Canada by TUGG - MASON LIMITED New Toronto, Ontario</p>
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This patent pending model with circular logo is illustrated in the May 1947 edition of ROD AND GUN In Canadaⁱⁱ. The reel bodies are aluminum with steel fittings and are held together by screws rather than rivets. Some bodies are shinier than othersⁱ. The gears are helical.

The second version of the reel has a diamond shaped logo on the faceplate containing the stylized version of the name "AMBASSADOR" and the back plate is marked "TUGG · MASON L^{TD} / MADE IN CANADA". This version of the reel with diamond shaped logo is illustrated in May 1947 issue of HUNTING and FISHING in CANADAⁱⁱⁱ and the June 1947 edition of ROD AND GUN In Canadaⁱⁱ, appearing just one month after the patent pending version was first advertised in that magazine, confirming the May/June 1947 timing of the design change (ignoring the weeks or months the copy was prepared before press-time). The box for the later reel, also in Dijon yellow, has a more irregularly textured finish. The same box label text shown above is printed on one white label applied to one end of the box, an indication of cost reduction for what I would describe as the "production" version of the reel. However, on my example, this label has the addition of an ink-stamped retail price of \$12.00.

In terms of local competition at that time, Allcock, Laight & Westwood (AL&W) were the dominant reel distributors and retailers. They were based in the Toronto area, too, but did not list any T&M reels in their catalogs. In AL&W Catalog #60^{iv}, published about a year after the Ambassador reels were first advertised in ROD AND GUN in Canadaⁱⁱ we see about half a dozen anti-backlash level-wind models of Shakespeare reels (with several possibly made by Inglis in Toronto) with retail prices ranging from \$11.50 to \$19.95. So this \$12.00 anti-backlash Ambassador reel was very competitively priced, just above the least expensive AL&W equivalent but from Tugg & Mason, a new and unknown brand of fishing reels at that time. The Ambassador is a nice level-wind reel. After cleaning and lubrication, the mechanism is on par with sturdier competitors in my collection, like the Shakespeare #1920 Wondereel, for example.

These Ambassador reels have no markings at all under the feet. Also there are no marks inside the bodies or on other parts to give any indication of a third party manufacturer although one has to wonder how this reel could suddenly appear in the Tugg & Mason product line, as discussed below, with no prior reel making experience unless it is a trade reel. The teardrop shaped side plates remind me of Bronson and Ocean City reels of the same era. The reels and the T&M marked tins of fish hook assortments are illogical for a company that was previously an automobile sales and service garage and briefly dabbled in the supply of aircraft parts just after WWII. It is almost like the reels and hook tins were the last gasp of hope to improve a failing business. Perhaps they were simply trying to take advantage of veterans returning from WWII.

No record of a patent or patent application or trademark could be found in the online records of the patent and trademark offices in Canada or the US but at least the magazine ads help date the very brief life of the Ambassador reel. An undated fourth version of the ad^v exists, given away by a slightly different layout of the advertising copy, showing the patent pending version of the reel.

As noted above, tackle collectors find tins of assorted fishing hooks with the Tugg & Mason name with a "T&M" logo. Some of those tins are marked with a Long Branch, Ontario post office box address and others have a specific street address from downtown Toronto on King St W., near Spadina. The reel boxes use "New Toronto, Ontario" as their location. The municipalities of Long Branch, New Toronto and Mimico (referenced in their earlier car ads in newspapers) are all now part of the City of Toronto and in some cases street numbers have been changed due to amalgamation of local governments. So trying to find the buildings they occupied is tough these days. The most recent address for the car dealership (and reel business) seems to have been located at what is now an LCBO liquor store near Lake Shore Rd and Third Street, just west of Royal York Avenue, Toronto. Whatever building they occupied at the King W Toronto street address has been slated^{vi} to be built-over by a condominium high rise if that has not already been done.

Regarding the use of the company name, "Tugg - Mason Limited" is marked on both versions of the reel box but the magazine ads (and the reel tins) use the correct legally registered version of the company name: "Tugg & Mason Limited", as discussed further.

We don't know exactly how the business transformed over time but the reels and hook tins seem to have been the last known products of the company and came on the market just before *Mrs. Anna Tugg*^{vii}, the last president of Tugg & Mason Limited, passed away^{viii}. This brings me back to the beginning of my research for this article, where I assumed we would find a Mr. Tugg and or Mason and some document that talks about their production of fishing reels. Well the story did not come out as expected.

The Origins of Tugg & Mason Limited

Harry Tugg^{vii} of Tugg and Mason Limited was a car salesman. His first business records on file in Ontario, Canada, were for a couple of registered partnerships in 1924-1925 that operated as Tugg and Welsh^{ix}. They sold early automobile models like Durant^{xi} brand Flint and Star that today are only seen rarely in vintage car shows. Years after that business was dissolved, Tugg is shown as working for Toronto Motor Car, someone else's dealership.

In 1931 he established Tugg & Mason Limited^{xii}. It was a formally registered private company (Ontario Corporation) and it was headquartered in what was then the village of Mimico, on what was then the western edge of Toronto, now part of the City of Toronto. The business remained there, until the end of this story, around

1948. The other original directors included a Mr. Kennedy Campbell Mason (also a car salesman but not listed as living in Toronto before joining T&M). Harry Tugg and KC Mason were listed as Sales Managers. David Bertram Goodman (the third Director) and Lily Iris Sherizen listed as Solicitors with Herbert Rubin Student-at-Law. The company was formed to sell and service cars and make related things (*but there was no hint of any fishing reels or hooks in their plans*). Opening capital of the company is shown as \$40,000 divided into 400 shares. (In those days, cars they sold e.g. Durant/Flint/Star/GM/Buick/Pontiac etc. retailed for around \$700-\$800 each, so they could afford to have a large inventory).

I have tracked down many automobile display ads listing Tugg & Mason in the archives of the Toronto Daily Star newspaper, through online access, but reproduction of the sometimes very cool art-deco display ads requires additional permission. Vintage car enthusiasts would love to see them, I am sure. Cars styles from the 1930's are the ones you see in old gangster movies. We had the same cars (and some of the same gangsters by the way) in Toronto during that period but cars from Canada in those days were slightly different from their American equivalent models and caught a lot of attention when they crossed the border into the US.

A few years after Tugg & Mason Limited was formed, it looks like Mr. Mason started to work with a competitor, selling competing Ford brand cars. Then Harry Tugg died of a heart attack in 1938, nine years before the fishing reels come into the picture. [My day was ruined when I read that and realized the story was not going to come out the way I had originally envisioned.] The Toronto Directories show that Harry Tugg's wife Anna (nee Goldhamer) became president of the company (although the corporate records I studied at the Archives did not show any official changes after the 1931 start-up, nor could I find a record as to how operations ultimately ceased). By the way, Anna Goldhamer emigrated from Czechoslovakia so it reminds me of another Canadian reel story involving Bata^{xiii}, also from Czechoslovakia whose brief involvement with fishing reels in Ontario may have been based on Shakespeare models made by John Inglis in Toronto^{xiv}.

Sometime near the end of WWII and a few years beyond during 1944-48, years after Harry passed away, the company somehow changed to become a supplier of airplane equipment and supplies^{xv}. Then in another twist, as discussed we find fishing reels and tins of hooks sold/made by the same company name. Both of these product additions or changes took place while Anna Tugg was President.

The Goldhamer family discussion on Ancestry.com mentions that Anna's brother Edward Goldhamer (aka Eddie Gould) had a job with Tugg-Mason. According to the City Directory, Eddie was actually the Secretary-Treasurer of Tugg & Mason Limited from early days of its operation. The Ancestry.com discussion has a statement making it sound as though there is evidence that Eddie Gould was directly involved in the tackle making business, but that is not the case. That Gould worked for T&M and that they made fishing tackle are 2 unconnected statements combined into one

sentence that is unintentionally misleading. Gould went on to become a principal of a successful advertising agency in Los Angeles^{xvi}.

Another possible catalyst for the fishing reels is a man by the name of Frank L Skinner, a manager that worked for Anna Tugg for several years towards the end of the Tugg & Mason business. [I looked but did not find a connection to Skinner's, the well known tackle shop in Toronto.] After Anna died, Jack Freeman asserts that Skinner re-married. By checking Toronto newspapers after 1949, I found ads showing that Skinner went on to be a commercial realtor in Clarkson but that trail ends in 1956. There were no marriage certificates found or other documents in the Ontario Archives or on Ancestry.com to confirm a marriage between Skinner and Anna Tugg as asserted by Jack Freeman nor were there any notices or articles in newspapers.

So in summary, my conjecture is that the business of selling cars suffered during the war and that like many companies in Ontario, capabilities were changed to support the war effort, in this case something to do with aircraft parts. Ultimately, under the leadership of Anna A. Tugg, Tugg & Mason Limited somehow got into the fishing tackle business, probably to take advantage of war veterans returning to Canada with leisure time on their minds. The Ambassador reel design and fabrication is very professional so some design and manufacturing expertise must have been acquired, not developed internally. It remains to be seen if these Tugg & Mason Limited Ambassador reels were actually made by Tugg & Mason Limited or are trade reels. At least 2 styles of the reel can be found, with patent-pending and production versions, but they were made for just a short period of time, are therefore rare and make an interesting reel for collectors of vintage Canadian fishing tackle.

ⁱ Thanks to Glenn Grady for sharing an image of his earlier version of the Tugg & Mason reel box paper that came with his patent pending version of the reel. Glenn advised me that he has found 2 types of finishes of the patent pending reel.

ⁱⁱ Research and copies of advertisements from the above noted issues of ROD AND GUN In Canada magazine were kindly provided by Paul Brisco from his private collection.

ⁱⁱⁱ Correspondence with Patrick Daradick

^{iv} An extensive range of AL&W catalog reel pages are available in the ORCA library per Volume XXVI, No. 1 The Reel News, pg. 41. [Please make the ORCA librarian happy and order the DVD #906 containing all ORCA holdings of AL&W materials.]

^v Refer to the Tugg & Mason Limited reel ad shown on the Ontariolures website of Patrick Daradick, www.ontariolures.com/reels/tugandmason.html

^{vi} Research by Ken Kerr

^{vii} More about Harry and Anna Tugg according to Ancestry.com via Toronto Public Library:

Names: Harry Igendhaft (Harry Tugenhaft [Tugg])

Home: 479 Ossington Ave, Toronto in 1927 (reported to be his father's home by relative Irene Jaloway)

Born: about 1892 in Ontario Canada

Died: Age 44, Mar 16, 1936, Mt Sinai Hospital, cause- Ventricular Fibrillation

Buried: Holy Blossom Memorial Park (Brimley & St. Claire E, Scarborough, ON in

Section], Plot 14)

Father: Nephtali Igendhaft (Naftoli Sugg/Tugg)

Mother: Esther Moler (Mohr, Mohrer)

Married (June 1927 Toronto): Anna [A] Goldhamer (born about 1898 in Czechoslovakia)

Father: Albert A Goldhamer (Austria)

Mother: Margaret Goldhamer (Austria)

Children: None

^{viii} The timing of Anna Tugg's death is based on assertions by Jack Freeman who has published work about Goldhamer family history. No death certificate or obituary could be found for her although a 1977 obituary for her brother Herbert said she predeceased him.

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- ^{ix} Canadian Jewish Review, August 29, 1924, pg. 13 display ad, courtesy of Ken Kerr
- ^x Company name: Tugg & Welsh, 18549 C.P. dissolved July 20, 1925 & 18807 C.P, dissolved Oct. 16, 1925, Expired partnership and sole proprietorship registrations, pre 1975 (Toronto), RG 55-17-60, Archives of Ontario
- ^{xi} <http://www.durantmuseum.org>
- ^{xii} Corporate Name: Tugg & Mason Limited, 26th October, 1931, Liber 286, Liber 50, RG 55-1, Company Charter Books, Archives of Ontario
- ^{xiii} Discussion of Bata on Ontariolures <http://ontariolures.com/reels/batareel.html>
- ^{xiv} Observation connecting Inglis Shakespeare reels to Bata in Reel Talk on the ORCA online website <http://reeltalk.orcaonline.org/viewtopic.php?t=654#p2247>
- ^{xv} Toronto City Directories 1929-1949, Toronto Reference Library
- ^{xvi} Statements of Jack Freeman in correspondence with Paul Manuel and at Ancestry.com